

## Bits and pieces

### More meetings, less towers, etc.

Bits and pieces from the Farmingtons:

■ Few things are less appealing than the concept of ONE MORE MEETING. Why, the very thought ranks right up there with root canals and potholes on Eight Mile Road.

Yet, it's worth noting that the combined meeting of the Farmington City Council, Farmington Hills City Council and Farmington Board of Education two weeks ago was a valuable exercise.

Some towns don't bother. Others can't get past the egos or differences to even try to schedule such a meeting. Farmington folks should be glad their officials can do this regularly.

Turnout wasn't very good — more people were sitting at the head table for the members of the city councils and school boards than in the audience. And all the issues discussed weren't necessarily of monumental importance — though the idea of opening schools for restroom usage at evening sports programs can be a No. 1 priority for parents.

But there is quite a bit that communities can accomplish by keeping the lines of communication open through these kinds of gatherings.

City officials learned the school district's strategy to deal with busing complaints, even as school officials heard more complaints on that subject from city officials. All three groups heard reports on teen drug and alcohol abuse, the Farmington Hills-run teen centers and the Multicultural/Multiracial Community Council newly completed guiding principles — important issues for the entire community that it makes sense to discuss in a joint setting.

Although such combined meetings can become love-fests, it was encouraging to see some honest-to-goodness issues and ideas dis-

cussed with candor and directness.

■ Caution and delay are the appropriate steps for Farmington Hills city officials facing the giant, burgeoning cellular telephone industry on one side and homeowners on the other.

City planners and commissioners have been trying for several years now to set up an ordinance to map out the ground rules for building new towers.

Meanwhile, the demand for more cell phones and more towers keeps growing. And zoning board members were forced, last month, to delay a decision on a new tower proposed for the Orchard Lake and 12 Mile area. That's good. Once a tower goes up, it isn't coming down.

Planners need to be cautious about what they'll allow and where, because homeowners know that if they can see an 80-foot tower outside their kitchen window their property value will nosedive. Finding a way to stop, slow, control or hide the construction of these towers before they fill every vacant parcel of land would be among the top priorities of this city.

■ Congratulations to the volunteers in Farmington who helped out the homeless through the South Oakland Shelter — including those at Our Lady of Sorrows (featured in a story on Feb. 2), Antioch Lutheran, Nardin Park United Methodist, St. Alexander's, Trinity Episcopal and Adat Shalom Synagogue.

■ Cable television subscribers can only hope that the days of this being a "one cable company town" are numbered. In the short term, competition holds the promise of more offerings at a better price (subscribers in Canton, for instance, get PASS and Disney free) and the possibility of bringing back channels that Time Warner doesn't want anymore, like CICO-TV.

## Oakland helps Detroit's image

Mayor Dennis Archer commands much of the spotlight for Detroit's economic rebound since he took office in 1993 — and rightly so.

Propelled into national prominence by a string of headline successes drawn from his energy, optimism and friendships, Archer has purposely reached out to Oakland County business leaders. That's a strategic change from his predecessor, Coleman Young, who seemed to relish alienating many of his neighbors to the north while resigned to the notion that Detroit could go it alone and succeed. Little Caesar Enterprises chairman Mike Ilich of Bloomfield Hills, who renovated the Fox Theatre and bought the Detroit Tigers, was one of the few Oaklanders to invest big in the city during the waning days of the Young administration.

While Young seldom ventured across Eight Mile, Archer has done so several times, including a Feb. 13 appearance at Temple Israel in West Bloomfield. Even County Executive L. Brooks Patterson of Waterford, a staunch Republican, lauds Archer, a rising star in the Democratic Party.

Since his election, Archer has seen his list of supportive Oaklanders grow:

■ Bernie Glickerman of West Bloomfield, president of Novi-based Crosswinds Communities, is developing 564 condominiums (Woodward Place) in Brush Park near Foxtown and 180 condominiums (Campus Farms at Elmwood Park) in downtown Detroit.

■ Buzz Silverman of Bloomfield Hills, president of Farmington Hills-based Silverman Companies, not only is busy building mid-priced homes in Clarkston, Orion, Oxford, Rochester, Commerce and West Bloomfield but also 30 houses (Townsend Street Single-Family Homes) and 28 townhouses (Islandview Townhouses Phase II) near Belle Isle in a federal empowerment zone.

■ Troy-based Standard Federal Bank has committed financing for a \$50-million retail, residential and golf course development near Fort Wayne in southwest Detroit. A developer still must be found and plans would have to pass muster with the city.

■ Troy-based Knart has proposed a Super Kmart at Seven Mile and Meyers on Detroit's northwest side.

■ Bill Davidson of Bloomfield Hills and chairman of Auburn Hills-based Guardian Industries, Bob Soanick of Bloomfield Hills and president of Southfield-based REDICO, David Hornalin of Bingham Farms and Thomas Wilson of Rochester Hills — together the brain-trust of Palace Sports and Entertainment of Auburn Hills — hoped to build Motor City Speedway, a \$40 million investment, at the Michigan State Fairgrounds (Woodward and Eight Mile), but neighbors cited noise and traffic fears to kill the project.

■ Mike Ilich plans to build a new Tiger Stadium in the Entertainment District, where he also operates Second City near the Fox. Count Jim Kokas of Bloomfield Hills in, too.

### OAKLAND WATCH



BOB SKLAR

He reaffirmed his commitment to Bricktown, where his upscale restaurant, Opus One, marks its 10th anniversary this summer.

"The easy road," said Kokas, "would have been for me to stay in the suburbs. We were not forced to sell. My dad wanted to retire and it was up to me whether I wanted to continue our restaurant in Dearborn, where we were highly successful, or do something different. I chose to help our city — and I see more and more people doing the same thing. Every year, we've shown growth. There's a sense of camaraderie in downtown Detroit that's not found everywhere. The investment climate is much better today than when we first invested. Property values, because of all the activity, are anywhere from four to six times greater than what they were 10 years ago."

Standard Federal's Bill Yaw, senior vice president, says the Oakland County bank won't hesitate to invest in Detroit if the development proposal is sound. "Our investment in the Fort Wayne area would help clean up an area that's not very viable at the moment, but which has pretty dynamic potential. It's on the river and the Detroit is a natural attraction."

"Detroit," the Bloomfield Hills resident added, "is the hub of southeastern Michigan. So the more good things that happen in Detroit, the better it is for surrounding communities."

I grew up in Detroit and graduated from Henry Ford High School but have lived in Oakland County for nearly 30 years. So my ties to both sides of Eight Mile are intertwined. It's heartening to see the Oakland connection to so many landmark urban projects. The motivation for the sudden investment rush is clear: thanks to Detroit's budding national image, there's big money to be made in a city once left for dead on the urban scrap heap.

There's another, less-obvious motivation why so many Oakland investors have followed Ilich's lead into Detroit: acknowledgement that a vibrant core city with entertainment, dining, shopping and housing opportunities, and the rat-a-tat-tat of substantive new construction, will help fuel the economic engine for all of southeast Michigan.

Bob Sklar is managing editor of our Oakland County editions.

### COMMUNITY VOICE

QUESTION:  
What's your dream job?



'I like what I'm doing. I'm a CPA...my dream job would be a pro baseball player.'

Dave Gustkey  
Farmington Hills



'I want to be Len Barnes — the AAA guy who goes on vacations all over and gets paid to do it.'

Mary Gustkey  
Farmington Hills



'I actually really enjoy what I do. I just don't get paid enough.'

Judy Timpner  
Farmington Hills



'To be a manager of a big, posh Caribbean resort.'

Fred Timpner  
Farmington Hills

### LETTERS

#### Cigars aren't so glamorous

In the Sunday, Feb. 9, edition of the Farmington Observer, two separate articles highlighted the "glamorous" side of the growing cigar-smoking trend. Section A contains a photo of a dance club's walk-in humidifier (cigar shop), just below a large photograph of dancers, which was captioned "Fun in Oakland County." In addition, an article on page 1 of the Business Section, entitled "Stogies," discusses Marj Jackson Levin's becoming the editor of the Detroit Cigar Lifestyle magazine, and touts the enjoyable aspects of cigar-smoking.

Ironically, in the same issue, the Observer also ran an article in Section A talking about cities and schools getting tough on drug and alcohol abuse, including tobacco use. What a mixed message this sends; don't smoke cigarettes, but cigars are harmless and fun.

Although Ms. Levin is quoted as being unconcerned with possible health issues, explaining that "You don't inhale a cigar," cigar smokers need to understand that they are purposefully exposing themselves to known carcinogens.

According to the American Cancer Society, even if you don't inhale, you are still exposing yourself to increased risks of cancer of the oral cavity, larynx, pharynx and esophagus — whatever sites the tobacco touches. Many a tobacco chewer has ended up with oral cancer, without ever inhaling. If you do inhale, your chances of lung cancer approach the level of risk faced by cigarette smokers (whose risk of the lung cancer is at least 20 times that of non-smokers).

Oral cancer victims can end up losing their whole jaw to the disease. Those with cancer of the larynx often have to have their larynx removed, thereafter requiring electronic devices to speak and tubes to eat through. They are referred to as "neck breathers." Hardly a glamorous picture.

I strongly encourage all cigar-smokers and potential cigar-smokers to investigate for themselves what the repercussions of their actions might be; don't be taken in by image and don't overlook or minimize the very real health risks. The phone number for the American Cancer Society's Cancer Information Line is 1-800-ACS-2345.

In the interests of balanced coverage, I urge the Observer to devote equal space and prominence to these facts and to the flip side of the disturbing but escalating cigar-smoking trend.

Sue Curtis  
Farmington Hills

#### Restore car repair protection

If you have ever been ripped off by an auto repair facility and think that the Michigan Bureau of Automotive Regulation will help

you recover damages, forget it! The Bureau is a toothless tiger which had its teeth pulled many years ago by Michigan legislators who succumbed to pressures by various automobile dealers associations' powerful lobbies in Lansing. The most they can do is issue a citation to the facility, which does nothing to help you. This is part of the reason the 47th District Court and all the other local courts in Michigan are overloaded. This is why lawlessness among auto repair facilities in Michigan runs rampant. It is with good reason that automobile owners fear taking their vehicles in for repairs, because they know their chances of being ripped off are better than even.

Fellow citizens of Farmington and Farmington Hills; I speak with a degree of authority on this subject. Besides being ripped off by a local repair facility, I have spent a good deal of time speaking on telephone, conversing by mail, by fax and in person with the office of Candice Miller, our Secretary of State; Mr. Warren Miller and Mr. Craig Doherty, bureau investigators; Mr. Richard Rileberg, investigator supervisor; Ms. Richmond, investigator supervisor; and I had a very long conversation with Mr. Fred Pirochta, director repair facility division, Bureau of Automotive Regulation. In short, I did my own investigations on both of the actions of the repair facility and the Bureau of Automotive Regulation.

I found the repair facility to not only be grossly incompetent and lawless, but totally without fear of being cited for a violation (they are cited) by the bureau. That is because there is no penalty to go with the citation.

Within the bureau, I found a great deal of evidence of bias against victim complaints, gross incompetence and outright intent to deceive complainants. I can only assume this is all brought about by the longtime inability to perform their needed services, due to bad legislation in the past which has the effect of demoralizing the bureau and creating outright chaos for auto repair victims. I hope that some of those who read this and who have the ability and will to act, will pressure legislators in Lansing to restore power to the bureau to effectively act on behalf of repair victims, not repair facilities.

Kenneth Kemp  
Farmington Hills

Opinions are to be shared: We welcome your ideas, as do your neighbors. That's why we offer this space on a weekly basis for opinions in your own words. We will help by editing for clarity. To assure authenticity, we ask that you sign your letter and provide a contact telephone number.

Letters should be mailed to: Editor, The Farmington Observer, 33411 Grand River, Farmington, Michigan 48335. Or they can be faxed to 810-477-9722.

## Farmington Observer

DAVE VARGA, COMMUNITY EDITOR, 810-901-2574

TOM BYRD, PUBLISHER, 810-901-2537

BOB SKLAR, MANAGING EDITOR, 810-901-2563

PHILIP SHERMAN, ASSISTANT MANAGING EDITOR, 810-901-2575

MARY SCOTT, MANAGER OF CIRCULATION, 810-901-2548

STEVEN K. POPE, GENERAL MANAGER, 810-901-2595

SUBURBAN COMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION

PHILIP POWER, CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD JOHN REDDY, VICE PRESIDENT/EDITORIAL RICHARD AGUIRRE, PRESIDENT

OUR MISSION: "Because we publish community newspapers, we think about community journalism in a fundamentally different way than our bigger competition. They consider themselves to be independent from the stories and communities they cover, swooping in to write the unusual or sensational and then dashing off to cover something else. We regard ourselves as both accurate journalists and as caring citizens of the communities where we work."

— Philip Power